

Meeting 2008 April 29th,

Were present:

- Mireille Guinée, Embassy of Belgium
- Emma Anderson, Embassy of Sweden
- Michael Grimm, Embassy of Germany
- Dave Denyer, Embassy of the United Kingdom
- Christine Moosbrugger, Embassy of Austria
- Scott Driskel, Embassy of the United States
- Agnieszka Woycik, Embassy of Poland
- Sarah Jansen, Embassy of the Netherlands
- Borja Cortès-Breton, Embassy of Spain
- Gabriel Branfam, Embassy of Romania
- Henri METAUX, Embassy of France
- Jean-Christophe PARIS, Embassy of France

Agenda/Minutes

The main subject addressed during the meeting was about the general information on international adoption in Ethiopia.

I. Adoption issues

1. Regarding adoption statistic datas, four groups were identified:

- a group with 0 adoptions per year: United Kingdom, Poland, Romania
- a group under 100 adoptions per year: The Netherlands, Austria, Germany, Belgium
- a group above 400 adoptions per year: Spain and France
- a group above 1000 adoptions per year: The United States (it might probably reach 2000 in 2008).

2. What is the trend?

For the second group, the figures seem to stay stable. For France (Ethiopia is the n° 1 country for international adoption) and for Spain (Ethiopia is the third country) the trend is that the number of adoption is increasing progressively. As far as the United States are concerned, the figures indicated a high rate of increase every year since 2005 (the estimated number of adoptions in 2008 is three times the number in 2005). If the trend continues, Ethiopia could be the n° 1 country for american adoptive parents given adoption from Guatemala, Vietnam, Russia and China are decreasing.

3. How do our capitals react to this phenomenon?

France explained the works undertaken by the "Mission Colombani" for international adoption and the investigations made by the Embassy last november. Spanish government is also very keen on this subject due to the increase of adoptions in Ethiopia.

4. National agencies accredited in Ethiopia to channel the adoptions.

Three groups were identified:

- under five agencies : The Netherlands (2); Austria (1); Germany (2); Belgium (2)
- between five and ten agencies: France (8)
- Over ten agencies: Spain (11) and US (22 and 5 more soon)

Regarding "costs" of the international adoption in Ethiopia, they can be divided into two groups:

- less than 10.000 euros: Austria, Spain, France
- More than 10.000 euros: Germany, US

France explained the coming mission program in may that will check financial reports of the French agencies for adoption in Ethiopia. It will also meet representatives of ministry of women's affairs (adoption department) and federal instance court of Addis Ababa. The Spanish Embassy would like to get the feed back of this mission given 11 spanish organisations work daily in Ethiopia. United States explained that 22 american organisations were already registred. In order to prevent the problems that occurred in Guatemala and to deter competition between agencies, field investigations will be undertaken.

5. Regulations in home countries.

Rapid presentation of national systems by each participants has been done. Austria informed that adoption issues are ruled by a federal law and that a legal reform will be undertaken soon. Regarding time issues, agreement procedure for adoptive parents takes between one or two years and the local procedure in Ethiopia between one and three months. Spain raised the difficulty to get an agreement for the european citizen who live here in Ethiopia.

6. the problematic nature of private adoptions.

The private adoption is mainly found in case of intra-familial adoption. US told that the last 9 out of 11 cases were revoked.

7. Experience when dealing with competent Ethiopian authorities.

Our main contacts are representatives of ministry of women's affairs (Ato Bulti) and ministry of federal instance court of Addis Ababa. We all agreed on the agent's of ministry of women's affairs good will but deplored their lack of tools and good information (a new law on adoption is being drafted but no one is able to clearly explain the new criterias). More transparency would be also appreciated. Thus, we all have to rely on the good work and investigations done by our agencies and consulates.

8. Fraud and checking of documents.

Fraud is not very common regarding adoption files. However, Austria raised an example of an entirely forged file and France gave information on a case of adoption between brother and sister. The main problem is the civil status documents (birth certificate...) and their legalisation. The weakness of the system is that a lot of file depend on the declaration done by the police (how the baby was found, when...) and that no one can check ethiopian civil status. As a consequence, the burden and the cheking belong to the associations and the embassies. Another difficulty is the problem of recognition by the national court of adoption when the parents are still alive.

9. Other issues.

Germany has raised the issue of very young babies (two or three months old) and the "too fast" ethiopian procedure. It has been answered that given the huge demand, the association find easily and rapidly adoptive parents for those orphans. Austria informed that the gender issue suspission it had on adoption (before most of adopted orphans were girls) is now solved. Finally, France raised the issue of the accompaniment by adoptive parents. Belgium informed that 50% of the children travel alone.

II. AOB

10. Visas:

Germany raised the issue of transit visa, especially for the Ethiopian citizens who migrate to the United States. Unlike the Netherlands, Germany requires a transit visa for these aforementioned citizens.

Poland has informed the participants about the problem it faced with familial re-union for Somali citizen (lack of relevant civil status documents).

Romania raised the difficulty for its citizens to get an Ethiopian visa from the closest Ethiopian embassy in Austria. A letter to Ato Menelik should be drafted by the Embassy of France on behalf of the European Presidency in order to ask that all EU countries citizen shall be authorized to get a tourist visa at Bole Airport.